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MISCELLANY

THE FIRST INTELLIGIBLE ANSWER

Several people, says Mr. Don Marquis in the New York *Evening Sun*, have asked us to tell them just exactly what this Vorticist movement in art is.

Vorticism, is the result when Cubism and Futurism rush into a vacuum from opposite sides, meeting in the centre.

They collide and whirl, producing something like a maelstrom in a turpentine bottle.

The harder they hit the faster they whirl.

The faster they whirl, the more vortex there is. And the more vortex there is, the more vertigo.

Some would define a Vorticist production as a vacuum surrounded by vertigo in motion.

The vacuum temporarily broken up when Cubism and Futurism meet soon reestablishes itself when the whirl begins.

The faster the whirl, the less there is in the calm spot in the centre—the more vacant the vacuum.

This is the scientific explanation.

Intellectually speaking, Vorticism is a revolving guess pivoted on nothing.

And there is a great mechanical and philosophical idea behind that. The less pivot you have the less friction you have and the faster you revolve.

And if the pivot is nothing at all, the friction is absolutely nil. The result being that the speed of the revolution may become infinite.

Thus we get another notion of Vorticism—Vorticism is the n th power of vertigo; vertigo in the infinite degree.

The fellow who got it up, whoever he was, had been looking at the universe, and he had stared at it so long that he finally saw the centre of it—saw the whole thing spinning round and round and saw the absolutely calm spot that it was spinning on, the only motionless thing in a cosmos the remainder of which couldn't stop if it wanted to; and after he had looked at that calm spot, that pivot of the universe for a while, he saw that it wasn't there at all, for it couldn't be there; it is too little to be there. And then he said to himself: This is a great discovery. I will either make a new religion of it or a new art.

And he tossed up a quarter, and it came down heads, and so he made a new art out of it.

Having told you what Vorticism is, we must go on and tell you how to look at it.

Don't look at it from the outside. You won't see anything at all if you do that.

Put yourself at the centre of the vortex, sit down on the pivot at the middle of the universe, place yourself in imagination at the imaginary axis of the cosmos, and watch what spins past you. That is the only way to look at it without becoming confused. If you try to look at it in any other way

you will be drawn into the eternal swirl revolving around the centre, and will become a part of that swirl, and you will go so fast that it will be impossible for you to fix your eye upon anything.

The only way to look at any art nowadays is to remain calm in the midst of revolution.

The Vorticists, having based themselves upon the universe itself, will last as long as the universe does. And the universe couldn't die (poor thing!) if it wanted to. For the first time in the history of art the absolute has been discovered and utilized.

But merely the will to understand it will not help you a great deal unless you know how to put yourself in the proper mood. To attain the proper mood, you must close your eyes and reflect upon how much universe there is, and how fast it is spinning, until you get dizzy. Dizzier and dizzier you will get, as you revolve with it, in imagination. And finally your dizziness will leave you, because all your ideas will be sucked out of your head by the motion of the universe. When this happens, and there is a complete vacuum where your mind was, that vacuum rushes and joins itself with the central and pivotal vacuum of the universe . . . and then you are in the right position from which to look at Vorticist art.

Which brings us to another great law: Any number of vacuums can occupy the same space at the same time.

Provided, of course, that the largest vacuum is no larger than the space into which it fits. All the smaller vacuums will fit into the larger vacuums on the telescopic principle. And even vacuums of absolutely equal size will fit into each other neatly. All you have to do is to shake a lot of them together and they sort themselves.

It is the same way with a lot of modern schools of art—some of the *vers libre* poets, et cetera, . . . all you have to do is to shake a lot of them together, and they sort themselves.

Thus we come to another great law showing the superiority of Art over Nature: Nature abhors a vacuum; but Art often builds itself upon one.

Is it all perfectly clear? Or are there any questions? If not, the class is dismissed.

Don Marquis

DURET ON WHISTLER

The volume on Whistler written in French by Théodore Duret has been translated into English by Frank Rutter and published by the Lippincott Company of Philadelphia. It is a handsome quarto with index and many excellent illustrations after pen and pencil drawings, etchings, pastels and oil paintings, not forgetting the portraits of Whistler's mother, of Carlyle and little Miss Alexander which have achieved great popularity in reproductions,

also the standing portrait of Théodore Duret himself, in connection with which he tells us just how the painter came to paint him in evening dress relieved by the colorful fancy dress over his arm and the fan in his hand. Duret describes fairly enough the struggle that Whistler had with the London artists and amateurs who did not relish the American belligerent spirit and the caustic remarks he made on British celebrities in the fine arts. When he comes to Whistler's departure from the presidency of the Society of British Artists he forgets to mention the *bon mot* of Whistler when rallied on his failure: "Yes, the artists have left, and the British remain." Speaking of Whistler's first appearance in London he says: "When Whistler came to establish himself in London he arrived there already formed, at an age when one no longer changes deeply, with a manner of being something very special. Also it appeared that his æsthetic differed from that of the English artists. Moreover he had no more affinity with the English as a man than as an artist. He was very brown, rather short, slender, with a very mobile countenance, impulsive, capricious. He gesticulated, he spoke loudly—all things opposed to British phlegm. His language was truly that of the country, but the moment he opened his mouth his accent unveiled him and revealed the American."

Duret might have added that when he arrived the feeling in the London upper classes was distinctly anti-American owing to the Civil War. "Thus Whistler was in a state of dissent in England. It was only when his person and his pictures returned to France that, placed in a centre where they had affinities, they could find their true place. It was from France, then, that the first just appreciation of his talent came." The recognition given him in Paris in 1865 and 1867 and the honors decreed him there later opened the eyes of British and American amateurs, though they did not bring success in a financial way. In part this failure to take the place his uncommon talent deserved was due to his impatient temper, which tended to isolate him from many people and ended by making him an egotist who reveled in the perilous joys of personal controversy. Others have written at length about Whistler, but no one has given so calm and temperate a review of his life as an artist as Théodore Duret, who was able to occupy an unpartisan position because he was not swayed in favor or against the technical questions that affected artists in their judgments of a distinguished contemporary.

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To the Editor of The Art World.

Sir:—

Well, the Independent Salon has opened. It is a staggering sink of æsthetic degradation.

Here is Democracy in art triumphant, somewhat in danger of being smothered in its own filth. Here at last is equality in art, the pulling down of all standards to the dead level of mental impotence and unspeakable stupidity. Floating on the dead-level surface of this mass of artistic scum is some mental and physical wreckage of sexual degeneracy, of swollen blackguardism and also, alas, a few feeble misled rush-lights from the Academy.

The greatest danger that lurks in democracy is

that it may be invoked by demagogues to inflict upon the people worse ills than democracy seeks to remedy. Unlimited, unlicensed democracy appeals to the moral crooks, the mentally incompetent and the degenerate. This interpretation of democracy, if enforced, must logically reduce all standards to a dead level of the most debased, the most crooked and the most mentally and physically impotent of the race. The truth of this has been fully and practically demonstrated by the present exhibition; and the exposing of some of the works there displayed does not and cannot deceive the cultured public as to their debauching influence. In the most shameless ways these creations exhibit the lowest vulgarity as well as blasphemous degradation of the human form.

Among the raft of trash there are some Nudes. But in the whole exhibition there is not a single painting of the nude worth the canvas it is painted on. Some of these nude paintings are so obscene and depraved as to demand the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Vice.

The vile sacrilege of the female form perpetrated in these pitiable efforts by moral perverts in this exhibition, should call forth a vigorous protest from the Suffragists. Do the women who are clamoring for equal rights and suffrage resemble the physical and moral misfits pictured on the canvases and in the statuary in this exhibition? It is not conceivable that such a flagrant libel on the female sex will be endorsed by the wholesome womanhood of America. It can only be responded to by the moral degeneracy and the anæmic lasciviousness of jaded soi-disant society women.

The exhibition, taken as a whole, is a cess-pool of stupidity, of ugliness, and also of some open obscenity, each striving for a lower level than the other. And this is "Democracy in Art!"

One writer says that Democracy means that "the people get what they desire." I do not believe that this exhibition represents the desire of the decent element of New York. To claim this would be to assert a wicked slander on the American people. To the bottom mob, democracy may mean the opportunity for releasing the baser instincts of the human mind to a licentious debauchery, mental and physical, such as is indicated by the exhibition in the Grand Central Palace, but I refuse to believe that the normal mass of Americans will accept this sty of æsthetic compost as a representative manifestation of American ideals in art.

It is exasperating to see the ignorance, to say the least, with which the promoters of this absurd movement twist the facts of history.

One writer says: "When the independents organized in France, conditions there were somewhat similar to those that prompted the formation of the American society, and the first exhibition was much the same. It was rated as of mediocre quality. Like the one in the Grand Central Palace, the mixture of all kinds submerged the radicals and put the others in distracting company. French evolution enlarged the freakish element for public amusement, but out of it rose some of the foremost figures in French art and the society became the most popular and the most prosperous in that land. Its success is attributed to its steadfast stand for freedom and equality."

Here we have two misleading statements: The

writer confounds the *Salon des Indépendants* with the *Salon des Refusés*, two entirely different things.

The "Salon of the Refused" was never organized. Those who were "refused" by the Jury of the Salon of 1863, in which they had eagerly hoped to see their works exhibited in the hope of getting medals or prizes of some kind, raised such a rumpus in the press in the name of "Liberty in Art," that Napoleon III, whose throne was violently attacked and who did not want any more enemies, ordered the Minister of Fine Arts to give these rioters a place in which to exhibit their works, and in the same building in which the Official Salon was held. Hence there was no organizing effort made. The whole thing was a spontaneous result of an un-organized "kick" on the part of a lot of radicals and some disappointed artists. Among the artists who since have become celebrated and who were refused by the Jury of the Salon of 1863 were the following:

Cazin, Fantin-Latour, Harpignies, Jean-Paul Laurens, Legros, Manet, Pissarro, Vollon, Whistler.

But there was no second "Salon des Refusés."

Something like twenty years later, about 1883, the first so-called "Salon des Indépendants" was, in reality, deliberately organized in Paris as a fakir show—and has remained such.

The second false idea spread broadcast by these writers is that some great artists were revealed by the holding of the exhibitions of the "Salon des Indépendants" in Paris. This is not true. Not a single man has emerged from those annual pits of stupidity and degeneracy, from the day of their organization to the present time.

I defy these ignorant hack-writers to point to a single great man who has exhibited in any one of the exhibitions of the Independent Salons of Paris and which have right along, from the first, been looked upon by Parisians as a huge farce. I do not consider any one of the notorious degenerates who might be brought forward as great in any sense except that of mental and moral corruption.

Moreover, to say that the Paris Salon of the Independents "has become the most popular and the most prosperous in the land"—is so at variance with the facts that it is laughable.

Respectfully yours,
Hamilton Morse

BOSTON PAINTERS AT THE ARTS

April saw a gathering in New York of works by half a hundred living artists of Boston—oil paintings and a sprinkling of pastels and water-colors. In New York the Boston artists appear comparatively little at the Academy shows, partly because they do not admire the great mass of the work by New York artists, partly because they suspect a prejudice against them on the part of juries composed of New York artists and think that their work will be rejected without regard to its merits. How much this represents truth, and if true at all, how much must be credited to prejudice and how much to natural inability to find anything to admire greatly in the works of Bostonians can not be decided here. The fact is that aside from the Boston trio of Tarbell, Benson and de Camp who appear at the Montross Gallery under the Sign of the Ten the public of New York has

small opportunity to view the products of the painting gild at the Hub. It was therefore an excellent idea of the National Arts Club on Gramercy Park, Manhattan, to invite two or three score painters of New England to a special show.

"The Silver Waist" by Joseph de Camp is a pretty bit of the painting of stuffs; the title is better chosen than another that is even more obvious, such as "What Fortune in My Teacup?" which is warranted by the eager look of the bonnie lass; but in all likelihood that was regarded as too old-fashioned and anecdotal for modern people who have been drilled to repudiate the very suspicion of a "story" in a picture and turn with trepidation from the *genre*. "The Fur Jacket" is another capital bit of brushwork without further interest. The sober woodland Muse of John J. Enneking was remembered in three canvases. Frank W. Benson showed a "Coot Shooter" in dory with lively sea and angry sky, and a "Fox Hunter." Louis Kronberg presents the back view of a "Ballet Girl in Yellow" profile to left, hands behind holding a red fan, and ugly shoulder-blades as prominent features. Ernest L. Major in "The Closed Door" with girl to left seated on a chest suggests a story—how could he?—and in "The Question" more than suggests an obvious situation with a pretty girl, red rose at girdle, and a youth with a banjo in the back. His "Blonde in Blue" got a silver medal at the Panama-Pacific. "Laeda" by Wm. W. Churchill had a nude nymph of graceful form touching with one foot the surface of a lake as she stands before a woodland background. Charles S. Hopkinson sent a novel scheme of three little girls climbing a trellis for grapes that suggests Copley. William M. Paxton had a very smoothly and deftly painted interior of the modern country house in "Breakfast," with a spick-and-span young husband, his face almost hidden by his newspaper, the still more comely young wife staring none too contentedly on the floor, as she sits half turned from the table, and a demure maid going out of the room to the right—a capital illustration for young married life, painted with a brilliant *factura*. Mrs. Adelaide Chase Cole showed a portrait sketch with an alert, alive look in the sitter and a "Study of a Young Girl." Arthur P. Spear exhibited "A Fantasy," subaqueous, with mermaids examining a sea-monster. Charles H. Woodbury had a marine, "North West Wind" executed in thick *impasto* expressing well the force of wind and wave; and Miss Margaret F. Richardson three good portraits. Charles S. Hopkinson sent his gold-medal winner at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1915, the portrait of a young woman in jacket and soft hat, salmon neck wrap, against a snowy background and pale sea, painted with a broad brush. Other guests were Hermann Dudley Murphy, Miss Gertrude Fiske, Bradish Titcomb, Miss Rosamond L. Smith—"Cinderella," no kitchen drudge, but a handsome young lady—Miss Lilian Westcott Hale—"Fortune Tellers" with teacup—Philip L. Hale—"La Princesse Lointaine" and others. Amongst other noteworthy canvases were those by Miss Marie L. Page—"Tenement Mother"—William J. Kaula, Miss Leslie P. Thompson—suggestive of Tarbell with "Girl Writing a Letter," Richard L. Meryman with a portrait carrying the silver-medal of the Panama-Pacific Exposition and Ettore Caser with